

SCHOOLS FORUM

Schools Forum Self-Assessment

21 September 2015

Content Applicable to;		School Phase;	
Maintained Schools	X	Pre School	X
Academies	X	Foundation Stage	X
PVI Settings		Primary	X
Special Schools / Academies	X	Secondary	X
Local Authority	X	Post 16	X
		High Needs	X

Purpose of Report

Content Requires;		By;	
Noting	X	Maintained Primary School Members	
Decision		Maintained Secondary School Members	
		Maintained Special School Members	
		Academy Members	
		All Schools Forum	X

1. This report sets out the self assessment for the Leicestershire Schools Forum

Recommendations

2. That Schools Forum note and comment upon the self assessment

Introduction

3. The Department for Education (DfE) issued a template in March to allow local authorities to assess the strengths and weaknesses of their Schools Forum. In light of a number of concerns expressed by schools on the effectiveness of the Leicestershire Schools Forum the local authority has completed the self assessment and now presents that information to Schools Forum for comment.

The Self Assessment

4. The self assessment suggests some areas of improvement;

- Election Process, Academy Members – headteacher representatives are elected through Leicestershire Secondary Headteachers (LSH) but the process for electing governors is not defined. For the last wave of vacancies LSH also sought nominations for governor representatives and have been approached to see if they would be willing to undertake the election. The Schools Forum regulations require that academy members are elected by the proprietor bodies of academies, they are silent over who the proprietor is. The local authority does not have information on who are the trustees of academies, it is proposed that election of governor representatives continues to be through headteachers.
- Canvassing Views and Representing Views – Schools, Forum members have historically reported that this can be the most difficult aspect of the role. Members need to consider all options available to them to ensure that there is a two way communication with represented groups taking into consideration the information on undertaking business is publicly available on the Leicestershire County Council Website.

<http://politics.leics.gov.uk/mgCommitteeDetails.aspx?ID=1018>
- Publication of Minutes – the timescale for publication of the minutes of meetings is inconsistent. The local authority will aim to publish minutes within three weeks of the meeting date
- Constitution – the self-assessment identifies some areas where more clarity could be built into the constitution. Cabinet approval is required for any constitution changes, it is proposed not to undertake formal changes at this time but set out that clarity in an additional document to support the constitution.

Conclusions

5. The Leicestershire Schools Forum operates well when the self- assessment tool is applied and the method of operation is considered against the Operational Guidance issued by the Education Funding Agency (EFA).
6. The local authority remains committed to operating a transparent Schools Forum which operates with integrity and within the regulations governing its role and purpose. In order however to ensure continual improvement the thoughts of Schools Forum are sought on both the self-assessment and actions that may arise from it.

Equal Opportunities Issues

7. None specifically arising from this report.

Financial Implications

8. None arising specifically from this report.

Officer to Contact

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Schools forum self-assessment toolkit

This toolkit provides local authority officers and elected members with a framework for assessing the strengths and weaknesses of their schools forum. The toolkit is designed as a set of questions which can be considered by individuals or the forum as a whole.

This self-assessment has been undertaken by Leicestershire County Council

Question	Yes / No	Notes
1. Are meeting dates set in well advance and details (including time and venue) published in an accessible manner to enable interested parties to plan their attendance?	Yes	Meetings published on County Council website. Rolling advance dates for 4 meetings are to be issues
2. Are meetings timed to coincide with key dates? (e.g. reporting of funding formula)	Yes	
3. Are meetings held in an accessible venue to enable observers to attend easily?	Yes	Observers now routinely attend meetings
4. Is there a dedicated website link for schools forum, is it current and regularly updated?	Yes	Held within the meetings area of the Leicestershire County Council website
5. Are the agenda and papers publicly available on the authority's website at least 6 working days in advance of the meeting?	Yes	
6. Are the papers published as a single document, so that users can download easily?	Yes	
7. If papers are tabled at the meeting, are they published on the website promptly after the meeting?	Yes	Reports are tabled at the meeting only on an exceptional basis
8. Are draft minutes published a reasonable time (e.g. within 2-3 weeks) after the meeting, rather than waiting until the following meeting?	Yes	Published before meeting but can be delayed

Question	Yes / No	Notes
9. Are the minutes clear and unambiguous, with sufficient detail to illustrate the discussions, without reporting verbatim every point made?	Yes	
10. Is the constitution clear and appropriate? Including eg <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - a clear process for ensuring proportional representation - the process for electing members and their tenure - the timescale for review is clearly set out - the process for dealing with repetitive non attenders 	Yes	It could be more explicit about proportional representation, membership and attendance could be monitored more effectively
11. Is there an induction pack or training programme available for new members?	Yes	
12. Is the election process clear and transparent? i.e. representatives are elected only by the group they are representing, whether phase-specific for maintained schools, or by the proprietors of academies for academy members.	Yes	No clear process set for the election of academy representatives and needs to be reviewed
13. Do the papers contain clear recommendations and indicate in a consistent manner whether the item is for information, consultation or decision?	Yes	
14. Is it clear to observers who attendees at the forum are representing? (eg by use of name plates, indicating sector)	Yes	
15. Does the chair manage the meeting well, ensuring that all are able to contribute to the agenda items, that no bias towards any sector is evident and that no single person or organisation is able to dominate the discussion?	Yes	Noting that new chair will be elected in September
16. Is there inclusive participation in discussions for all phases and types of members?	Yes	
17. Do members actively canvass views and objectively represent their whole	Partly	Picture is mixed, governors regularly report difficulties in the ability to engage

Question	Yes / No	Notes
peer group at the forum and provide feed back after meetings?		widely with peers
18. Where votes are required, is it clear who is eligible to vote for different items?	Yes	
19. Where votes are required, are the arrangements for recording the votes clear and unambiguous?	Yes	
20. Is there a system in place for a decision if votes are tied?	Yes	But isn't written into the constitution
21. Is the operational & good practice guide used to regularly review the forum's adherence to good practice?	Yes	

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